



**Commission on Forensic Science  
Standards and Certifications Advisor Committee (SAC)  
DRAFT MEETING NOTES – Approved 09/10/18**

June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Immediately following the Commission on Forensic Science's Meeting (~ 11:20 AM – 12:17 PM)  
200 S. Adams Street, Wilmington DE

**Voting Committee Members:**

Jamie Armstrong, CODIS Administrator, DFS  
Johna Esposito, Quality Assurance Manager, DFS  
Dr. Krystal Hans, Assistant Professor, Department of Biological Sciences, DSU  
Robyn Quinn, Laboratory Manager II - FES

**Absent Voting Members:**

Susan Wilgus, Forensic Nurse, Public Defender Office

**Proposed New Members (not present):**

Ashley Wang, Analytical Chemist III – FCU at DFS  
Julia Vekasy, Chief Forensic Investigator – MEU at DFS

**Agenda:**

1. Welcome, Call to Order-Johna Esposito
2. Review and Approval of Minutes from April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018 - KH moves to approve, JA seconds. Approved.
3. Discussions of responses from the Commission to the SAC Report
  - a. Section I: Retention Rates
    - i. Add MEU positions (Forensic Investigators, Morgue Techs, Medical Examiners) to list of retention.
    - ii. Perhaps make this less statistical and more specific.
    - iii. The fact that we have a small staff makes the percentages less meaningful (i.e. percentages are swayed greatly by small changes in absolute numbers).
    - iv. Gather information on why people are leaving.
      1. May need to ask HR for records.
      2. Some of this may be anecdotal.
    - v. Some discussion wondering if this is the best way to show retention.

1. Perhaps giving the average current tenure of existing employees (i.e. it is 3.5-4 years, currently, for analysts) would be a better way to do it.
  2. Another option may be to total the number of months that various positions have been vacant within the last X time period.
  3. Could just graph groups by tenure (i.e. number of employees who have been here 0-1 year, 1-3 years, 3-5 years, 5-10 years, etc). Graphs could possibly also include everyone who has worked here in the last X (3?) years, weather they left or are still here.
- vi. One reason retention here isn't worse is because there aren't many close options for competing jobs (i.e. no private lab in DE).
- vii. One way to increase retention may be to require new employees to agree that, once trained, they will stay for a certain period of time or pay back the costs of that training. Could also do this for people being sent (i.e. state is paying for) to conferences or trainings . . . anyone who leaves within, say, one year, of attending the conference must pay the state back for that conference.
- viii. **JCBE** work on gathering stats on retention for MEU and reasons for vacating positions.
- b. Section II: Consequences of Resignation
- i. Is there some way to capture the cost of on-boarding new employees to better put a dollar figure to resignation costs?
  - ii. When people leave they take the training/knowledge that they've gained with them.
  - iii. **JCBE** will work on assigning a dollar figure cost to resignation.
- c. Section III: Salary Data for Similar Labs
- i. Need specific information (rather than salary ranges) where possible.
  - ii. Add information on where the data came from.
  - iii. Union vs. non union.
  - iv. Other small states such as RI and NH.
  - v. Add other positions, especially Forensic Investigators, Morgue Techs, and Medical Examiners. Some discussion on adding secretaries but decided that most administrative type jobs in other jurisdictions are unlikely to be specified as "forensic" so it would be difficult to find appropriate comparisons.
  - vi. **KH and JA** will work on additions to this table including:
    1. Adding a column for union vs. nonunion
    2. Adding a column to show where the data came from

3. Add MEU positions
4. Find additional comparison data (i.e. from states or counties with similar populations being served), focusing where possible on specific accurate data (such as you'd get by finding out that a state generally pays analysts 80% of the midpoint posted on their website rather than just showing the whole range).
5. Add a column for cost of living difference compared to Wilmington, DE (this was not discussed during the meeting, but is in the preliminary report as a potential addition and would likely be easy to look up online)

vii. Section IV: Career Ladder

1. Commission agreed that an extended career ladder would help increase retention.
2. Much discussion over if the promotions within the ladder should be for time in serve or for a specific reason. May want to incorporate both within the proposed ladder.
  - a. Discussion about certifications for individuals and if they should be required for promotion.
    - i. TOX's most applicable certification is ABFT certification (anyone working in tox at least 3 years may apply for ABFT certification).
    - ii. DNA and FCU members could be ABC certified. ABC certification has, historically, been antiquated and somewhat irrelevant, but they are apparently overhauling the program so, in the future, it may be more applicable.
    - iii. All types of certifications come with monetary costs, lots of study time, and continuing education requirements.
      1. Would these be covered by work or by the individual?
      2. If the career ladder step required the individual to become certified on their own dime and time, then the associated raise would have to more than cover the cost of the certification for it to be worth it to the employee.
    - iv. Not everyone is convinced that requiring certification is the right way to go, but some argue that it would only increase the knowledge, reputation, and credentials of the staff. Additionally, there is some thought that requiring certification is the way the field is moving anyway.
    - v. Some discussion of developing a certification program here in Delaware specific to Delaware, but decided that would likely be more difficult and time consuming than requiring ABC certification.
    - vi. John (Evans, during commission meeting) mentioned that we are doing as much as we can, internally, to give additional responsibilities at increase career ladder levels (i.e. ACIIs may do certain types of reviews that ACIs and IIs can't do) and that it would be good to require more outside responsibilities such as ABC certification to make for more well-rounded employees.
    - vii. Requiring certification could be a way to set this division, and the positions within it, apart from other state jobs with the same titles, making it easier to justify pay raises, career ladders, etc.
  - b. There was also the argument made that you should compensate people for being great scientists . . . being great at what they do, meaning not necessarily only for

going out to a bunch of meetings and trainings but also provide career ladder opportunities to people who have been dedicated and great at their jobs.

3. Other possible activities that could result in promotion on a career ladder, as discussed during SAC:
  - a. Become a member of a professional organization
  - b. Present at a conference
  - c. Publish a paper
  - d. Complete a research or validation project
  - e. Perform community outreach (teaching, presenting, tours, etc)
  - f. Participate in an organization as an officer or board member
  - g. Supervising an intern/new trainee
  - h. Serve on a committee
4. Goal would be to develop a career ladder, taking the discussions above into consideration, as well as using existing ladders (i.e. from state agencies or from other forensic laboratories) as a model.
5. Develop career ladders for the following (note that this assumes that positions are re-classified as forensic-specific, where necessary):
  - a. Forensic Investigators
  - b. Forensic Analysts (which would include the analysts in DNA, TOX, and FCU)
  - c. Morgue Technicians
  - d. Forensic Laboratory Managers (to include LMIs, LMIIs, and QAM)
  - e. May also want to have a ladder for Forensic Laboratory Technicians (which, ideally, would all be full time positions)?? –
6. New members (JV and AW) will be tasked with creating potential career ladders, JV for the MEU side and AW for the lab side.

viii. Section V: Argue for DFS-Specific Positions

1. Need to really distinguish how DFS positions, expectations, training, requirements, etc. are different from other like-titled positions across the state. What separates us at DFS?
2. Some arguments were made for recommending that DFS positions are outside the merit system, since this would offer more flexibility for salary and for expectations. However, the flip side is that employees would no longer be protected by the merit rules.

3. Some discussion of unions, and how perhaps a union would allow for protections.

4. Nobody was specifically tasked with working on this yet.

- ix. GOAL – Have a new draft of the report, with the above-listed additions, available for the commission meeting on September 10<sup>th</sup> – (There is a possibility that an outside agency will be conducting a salary review with a report due in October and we'd like, if possible, to have our report finalized and available at that time.)

4. Additional Discussion

- a. We need to replace Robyn, who is retiring from the state at the end of the month. Would like to add MEU person (Julia?) and FCU person (Ashley W?). JCBE will contact them.

5. Adjourn – Move by ARQ, KH seconds, Approved.